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Hoxey & Orthodoxy.

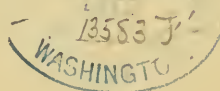
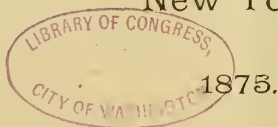
HOXEY
AND
ORTHODOXY:
A
COMEDY

In Five Acts.

BY
W. C. M. STECKEL.

AUTHOR'S EDITION.

New York.



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HOXEY AND ORTHODOXY.

PERSONS REPRESENTED.

MARK RUSHTON.—A retired Merchant.

DEACON JONATHAN STEADFAST HOXEY.—An exemplary specimen of piety, with one eye on the “chances” in this world, and the other on the next.

DR. RUGGLES.—An old discarded clergyman, who would make heaven a shockingly common place.

GEORGE WASHINGTON MUGGINS.—A simple gentleman, whose faculty for getting his foot into things makes this world a hot and lively habitation.

CHARLEY RUSHTON.—Nephew of MARK RUSHTON, } Clerks in a New York
HARVEY CHESTER.—His Friend, } Dry-Goods house.

GEORGE WITHERS, Esq.—A young Broker, who believes in cheek, and practices what he believes.

REV. C. VINCENT SMITHERS.—A meek and harmless young follower of the Disciples.

PAT O'DONOVAN.—One of the undigested “Problems.”

RUTH HOXEY.—A victim of early piety.

NELLIE RUSHTON.—An heiress, only daughter of MARK.

MARIA STANHOPE.—Who has almost given up matrimonial hopes and turned the flow of her maiden sympathies towards the poor heathen in the antipodes.

PRUDENCE HARRAMAN.—A Yaukee “problem,” maid of all work.

CHARACTERISTICS.

MARK RUSHTON.—Plain, open, dignified, yet easy and social.

DEACON HOXEY.—Grim and sourfaced, with a constant frown; stiff and awkward in gait; sharp and decided in conversation, as if his remarks implied facts from which there was no appeal; aggressive demeanor.

DR. RUGGLES.—Frank, blunt and outspoken; hearty and earnest in speech and action.

MUGGINS.—Eccentric; going by fits and jerks; speaking spontaneously; somewhat simple; good-natured.

CHARLEY RUSHTON.—Frank, light-hearted, boyish.

CHESTER.—Quiet, subdued, thoughtful, with occasional sudden outbursts of feeling or passion; dignified; soliloquizing.

WITHERS.—Full of assurance; cool and self-possessed under all circumstances; forward, cheeky and pushing; adjusts himself to circumstances; hypocritical, or any thing else, when it suits his purpose; smooth tempered.

REV. SMITHERS.—Slow, smooth, drawling, monotonous, with a sanctified air speaking mechanically.

PAT DONOVAN.—Vivacity of a lively Irishman.

RUTH HOXEY.—Animated, gushing and careless; in presence of Hoxey, subdued and sober-looking, but mischief sticking out everywhere; outspoken; thoughtless; changeing from grave to gay and *vice versa* in a second.

NELLIE RUSHTON.—More subdued; naïve and graceful; affectionate; retaining some girlish mannerisms.

MARIA STANHOPE.—Very old-maidenish; longfaced and serious; never smiling or given to any pleasantry; always speaking in complaining tone of voice; sanctimonious.

PRUDENCE.—Pert, light-hearted Yankee girl.

COSTUMES.

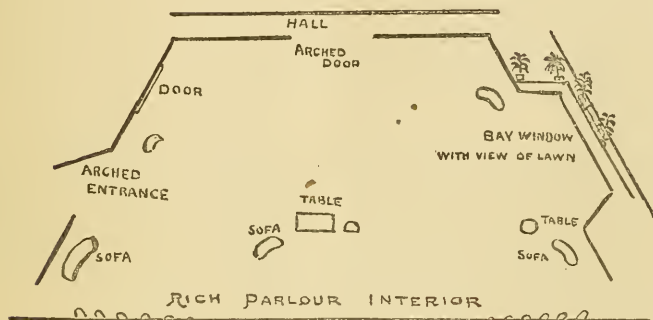
As the action of the drama is cast in the present day, an enumeration of any particular series of costumes would be superfluous. Their selection is best left to "the powers that be," keeping in view, however, their relative fitness to the action of the play as regards character, time and place.

STAGE DIRECTIONS.

The actor is supposed to face the audience. R. means Right; L. Left; C. Centre; R. C. Right centre; L. C. Left centre; B. Back on stage; C. D. Centre door; R. U. D. Right upper door; L. U. D. left upper door.

HOXEY AND ORTHODOXY.

ACT I.



SCENE.—(No change.) *Parlor in Rushton Villa. At rise of curtain, Mr. Rushton and Dr. Ruggles enter through bay-window, R.*

RUSHTON. My dear doctor, this visit is a real pleasure. I'd almost made up my mind that you'd cut our acquaintance altogether.

RUGGLES. No, no, Rushton! The fact is, I've scarcely put my nose outside the cottage for the last six months. You know, human nature has its weak sides, and clergymen, unfortunately, are no exception to the rule. Ever since the villagers virtually kicked me out of their pulpit, I confess I have felt just a little soured, and confined myself to the companionship of my books.

RUSH. If it's not an impertinent question, I should like to ask you the cause of your difficulty. I've questioned Maria, who is a strict member of the church, on the subject, but she can only roll her eyes heavenward and shake her head.

RUGGLES. You see, I'm getting a little old, and sometimes become impatient of the petty jealousies, bigotry and uncharitable bickerings of my congregation. They listened to my sermons, but as for reducing their Christian doctrines to the daily practices of life, they might as well have been deaf, dumb and blind. I began to speak

pretty plainly about this matter, and, to correct the narrow sectarian spirit among them, represented God as the Father of the whole human race, who loved his children, and made no distinction whether they came as Protestants, Catholics, Universalists, Jews or Mahometans, so long as they came with sincere hearts, according to their own faith. This doctrine didn't please them; it was bringing too miscellaneous a crowd into heaven, which place they thought should be reserved for a select circle; but,—to cut a long story short, they voted me my walking papers, and called a young clergyman from the city to fill my place.

RUSHTON. Yes, yes—the blockheads! I know this young man; he comes here often; one of Maria's pets. He'll just suit them—he's as stupid as the best of them. I believe if any new idea should enter his head, it would throw him into convulsions.

DR. They say he's very successful, however, and has caused quite a revival.

RUSHTON. Ha! ha! Yes, especially among the female portion of the community. You know, Doctor, women are extremely sensitive creatures; very susceptible to the influence of religious eloquence; especially so when it rolls from the tongue of a soft young man and is backed up by the terrors of brimstone, which is bad for the complexion.

DR. Now, Rushton, don't be hard on the poor women; they can't help it; it's their nature. By the by, how is your daughter Nellie?

RUSHTON. Very well, thank you. I expect her back from church every minute, with some of the guests who are passing their summer vacation with me. Here come several of them now.

Enter Charley and Chester from lawn.

CHARLEY (*shaking hands*). Good-morning, Doctor, I haven't seen you for an age. My friend, Mr. Chester (*Business of introduction*.)

DR. Good-morning, gentlemen—but what brings you from church so early? I hope the sight of a deacon and silver plate didn't frighten you away before the close of the services.

CHARLEY. Ha! ha! That's a reflection on our financial condition.

No, sir; you've made a very bad guess; we haven't been to church at all.

DR. Not been to church, and such a beautiful day too!

RUSHTON. I'm afraid there's a lack of holiness here somewhere.

CHARLEY. You see, Harry is something of an infidel.

DR. An infidel? impossible!

CHESTER. The term is misapplied, sir.

RUSHTON. It may mean any thing and every thing nowadays.

CHARLEY. Well, a skeptic then, if that will suit you better.

DR. R. And may I ask, my young friend, what makes you skeptical?

CHESTER. There are very many things taught which my reason fails to reconcile with truth, and for this some persons are pleased to intimate a too close intimacy with the gentleman in black.

DR. R. Your friendly critics are ungenerous. There are mysteries connected with our destinies, which have been such from the beginning, and will be so to the end; we are all groping in the twilight of being, and our finite senses cannot grasp the towering outlines of a future in whose shadows we live. What is better still, the secret is not imparted to any favored few; so you can tell the friends who condemn your doubtings that they had better not cry until they get out of the woods.

(Voices heard outside. All rise.

RUSHTON, (rising). Ah! here come the rest of the folks.

CHESTER, (to Ruggles). And here comes one who will scarcely share your indulgence to doubters.

Enter Hoxey, Maria, Withers, Nellie, Muggins and Ruth.

HOXEY. (rubbing his hands) Here we are again.

RUSHTON. And in good time. Mr. Hoxey, my old friend Dr. Ruggles, Mr. Hoxey, and Miss Hoxey (Ruth bows); the rest you know.

(Business of introduction. Other characters greet Dr. R.

NELLIE (shaking hands). I'm very glad to see you, Doctor.

DR. R. Ah! my little girl, you're looking prettier than ever.

RUSHTON (seating himself, R.). You look as if you'd enjoyed a pleasant sermon. *

HOXEY. A glorious treat, sir; a strong, vigorous sermon.

RUSHTON. What was the text?

HOXEY, MARIA, WITHERS (in concert). First Sannael, 15th Chapter, first to fourth verses.

MUGGINS. The one-eyed chapter of the one eyed Sam-u-el.

(Ruth puts her hand over his mouth.

HOXEY (looking fiercely at Muggins). What's that, sir?

MUGGINS (frightened). I—I—mean Sam the first, and fifteen chapters. (Aside.) Hang it! I've put my foot in it! I must say something pious 'else the old buffer'll get down on me. It's where Saul

(*)

POSITION OF CHARACTERS.

:: Nellie.
:: Withers.

:: Maria.

:: Hoxey.

:: Rushton.

:: Ruth.

:: Ruggles.

:: Muggins.

:: Charley.

Some seated and others standing.

:: Harvey.

is commanded to slay the Amalekites, you know; and—and he sails in awfully and slews old men, young men, old maids, young maids, mermaids, mules, cats, every thing. Oh! it was glorious!

HOXEY (*impressively*). It was just. The heathen molested the children of Israel and would not receive the Gospel. They deserved to be exterminated.

MUGGINS (*aside*). I'm glad I'm not an Amalekite; that old rhinoceros would swallow me whole.

DR. R. I think such subjects might be left out of sermons very advantageously; they do not tend to inculcate lessons of charity nor gentleness.

HOXEY (*pompously*). Permit me to differ with you, sir. If the heathen will not receive the Gospel when it is brought to them with such pains, they deserve to be put to the sword. Yea, smite them with the sword of righteousness!

(*Muggins mimics Hoxey and causes Ruth to laugh.*)

HOXEY (*severely to Ruth*). Don't you forget that this is Sunday!

RUTH (*pouting*). Yes, Pa.

DR. R. Well, you seem to have this thing settled in your mind, so I'll not presume to argue further.

(*Ruth, Nellie, Muggins, Charley, Withers and Chester, converse together in the bay-window, R.*)

HOXEY. I have no sympathy with any of the tribes of doubters, skeptics and heathens. It's mere stubbornness and conceit. They think themselves wiser than their forefathers. Now there's a young man, (*pointing at Chester as he comes forward and sits, R.*), and would you believe it, he actually doubts the divine origin of the Testament and divinity of Christ; what do you think of that, sir?

MARIA (*horrified*). Well, I never!

HOXEY. If that was *my* son, I'd thrash the devil out of him and if I'd break every bone in his body.

RUSHTON. Come, Joseph, you're a little severe on poor sinners.

HOXEY. No, sir. Such men are not to be trusted; they're capable of committing any crime. If an employee of mine held such ideas, I'd give him his walking-papers in a minute.

RUSHTON. I'm afraid we don't exactly think alike on this question; so suppose, for a change, we put ourselves into a condition of worldliness and prepare for dinner.

HOXEY (*rising*). Well, next to a good sermon, I enjoy a good dinner. (*Sharply to Ruth.*) Come, Ruth. (*Exit with Ruth, U. C. D.*)

RUSHTON. Get ready, all of you. Come, Doctor. (*Aside to Ruggles as they exit.*) Ha! ha! That's rather a strong dose of orthodoxy, eh!

RUGGLES. Yes; what cruelty wouldn't such a man perpetrate in the

name of religion ! Why he'd burn sinners by the wholesale. (*Exit R.*

(*Nellie and Withers exit, U. C. D. Charley, Chester and Muggins*

CHARLEY. What do you thing of old Hoxey now ? [*come front.*

CHESTER. I think he's a thick-headed bigot.

MUGGINS. I think he's a d—n fool. Rather a hard thing to say of my prospective father-in-law, but then my motto is, "The truth should be told though the heavens fall."

CHARLEY. What sort of a preacher is this Smithers ?

MUGGINS. He's worse than castor oil.

CHARLEY. That's rather hard on him ; but you ought to know something about it, you had an eye on the ministry yourself.

MUGGINS. Ha ! ha ! Do you know how that came about ? I'll tell you. My mother was a very pious lady, and I don't know whether she discovered signs of early piety in me, or thought I was good for nothing else ; anyway, she determined that I should study for the ministry. I kind of thought I wasn't cut out for that kind of business, and after a stay of six months at college, the faculty thought so too and gave me their permission to go home, with a pressing invitation to remain there.

CHESTER. A narrow escape, I declare !

CHARLEY. And was your mother satisfied with the result ?

MUGGINS. Well, yes. Somehow or other, I always got my foot in it at college. If there was any scrape, and any fellow was caught that fellow was sure to be myself. One night the boys proposed to put a young calf in the German professor's bed, and I was elected to do it. We tied the calf's legs, put a ladder to the window, and up I went, boosted by the other fellows. I got in the room all right, put the young calf in bed and covered it nicely ; but just as I turned to go back, another fellow crawled in at the window. I asked him if all was serene, and he said it was ; I thought so too, when he lit the gas and collared me. By George ! if it wasn't the professor himself, with the President and whole Faculty at his back.

CHARLEY. Ha ! ha ! You must have felt serene !

MUGGINS. The calf did, but I assure you I didn't.

CHESTER. What did they do ?

MUGGINS. The President looked me all over with a sort of demoniac grin, and then said : "Calf number one will please carry calf number two to its bereaved parient in the stable, and to-morrow, calf number one will likewise betake himself to his parient."

CHARLEY. That was hard luck !

CHESTER. And the church lost a possible shining light.

MUGGINS. Yes, sir. There's no knowing what's in me. I might have provided a first-class sensation some day.

CHARLEY. How goes your little game in that other quarter, eh, cupid?

MUGGINS. What quarter?

CHESTER. Come now—the brimstonic quarter?

MUGGINS. Ah! I'm dead gone there. The Miss Brimstone, I think, is in a high state of readiness to be ignited in the matrimonial bonds; but before that event can possibly take place, there's a whole sea of brimstone to be waded through to get at the old devil himself. I shudder when I think of it. But I'm going to do it; I'm going to tackle the old coon, even if I'm slewed like a Philistine.

CHARLEY and CHESTER. Bravo! bravo!

MUGGINS. If I succeed, I'll arrange with some fellow to send me a telegram, the minute I'm married, calling me to Europe on business of life and death, and when I get a couple of thousand miles between myself and my amiable father-in-law, I shall lay off for the millenium. (*Looking off R.*) Ah! excuse me fellows, there's Ruth going to dinner; I'll join her. (*Exit R.*)

CHARLEY. What progress do you make, Harvey; eh, old boy? You're too bashful; I'm afraid you haven't the courage of a fly.

CHESTER. I can't help it. When I'm alone I plan just what I'm going to say and do; but the very moment she appears on the scene, I'm knocked on the head, as it were, and seem stunned. Some spell seems to hold me and say: "Keep your distance, young man." I have a kind of reverence for her which will not permit me to come too near, and when I touch her I tremble as though I had an attack of the ague, or were trespassing on holy ground.

CHARLEY. Pshaw! this is all nonsense. There's nothing in a woman to be afraid of! Look at Withers; see how he convoys her around.

CHESTER. Yes, he pulls her around as if she were the commonest baggage—confound his cheek.

CHARLEY. Why, that's his capital. Strip him of cheek and assurance, and there's nothing left of him.

Enter Nellie, R. D.

NELLIE. Charley—Mr. Chester, are you coming to dinner?

CHARLEY. Yes, Nel. Harvey, escort Nellie to the dining-room. I'll follow in a minute.

(He pushes Nellie towards Harvey who offers his arm. As they are about to exit, R.)

Withers enters, C. D.

WITHERS. Here you are, Miss Nellie; I've been looking for you everywhere. (*Goes to her.*) Shall I have the pleasure of escorting you to dinner?

NELLIE. Thank you, I'm provided with an escort.

WITHERS. Ah! beg pardon; remember our little walk after dinner!

NELLIE. Perhaps. *(Exit Nellie and Chester, R.)*

CHARLEY. I say, Withers, if you're particularly anxious to escort somebody to dinner, I'll call Aunt Maria.

WITHERS. Get out, you young rascal; do you want to give me a sour stomach?

CHARLEY. I didn't mean that you should swallow her. Ha! ha!
(Exit, R.)

WITHERS. I was just a minute too late. Never mind, the counter-hopper will be happy for a half hour or so. I'm certain he's in love with her. Poor fellow! I know him like a book: one of those poor devils who surround the women they love with a halo of ideality and look upon her as some sort of pure, superior being whom they scarce dare approach. Ha! ha! I was so myself once. I thought Polly Andrews an angel, but when afterwards I became very intimate with her—gad! how that feeling was knocked out of me! What a common lot of mortals we are, anyway, when we know ourselves and each other well! The women especially, with their many arts, presumptions, their haughty parading, affectations, and thousand little make-believes; yet when we break through this thin masquerading crust, what poor, weak, dependent little things they are. Well, old boy, profit by the knowledge and make it pay. You've got the inside track so far. Let me take a practical survey of the field. There's nothing like going at things methodically. First the prize,—pretty little girl—only daughter—father wealthy and aged fifty—will do something handsome for son-in-law, no doubt—or, at all events, die within a reasonable period and leave him his fortune. Next, competitors in the field. First, young village clergyman—pshaw! a regular milksop—she won't have him, that settles his hash. Next, number two: young dry-goods clerk—poor as Job's turkey—no cash, no dash, no cheek—don't know how to handle women—a deplorable lack of brass; I'm afraid I'll have to rule him out too. Number three, ahem! Mr. Withers, broker and banker; that sounds well—I might add, on other people's money; but that's immaterial. Well, Withers, you ought to know how to handle women, and I think you do; you've had enough on a string for it, at any rate. If I do say it, I think you're about the right sort of a fellow, and, by George! you shall have the girl—that settles it. *(As he is about to go, Prudence enters and arranges chairs.)* Ah! there's the maid of all work. By the way, I might as well improve the opportunity, and take a kind of inventory of my future possessions. I say, Prudence?

PRUDENCE (*coming forward*). Did you call, sir?

WITHERS. Yes. Why, I declare, you look neat and pretty enough to be the mistress of the house.

PRUDENCE. O laws, sir, don't!

WITHERS. It's the Gospel truth; and, by the way, this is the finest house and grounds on the whole river.

PRUDENCE. It ought to be, for I heard Mr. Rushton say that he paid one hundred and fifty thousand dollars for it.

WITHERS (*aside*). And he must have about double that amount out in other investments. By Jove, that's not bad! Look here, Prudence; you know these old widowers are very uncertain beings, and sometimes take the matrimonial fever very late in life; now I suppose there's any amount of widows shying around here to catch the old man.

PRUDENCE. Laws, how you do talk!

WITHERS. And I'll bet you set your little cap now and then, don't you?

PRUDENCE (*screaming*). Me?

WITHERS. Why not? You're pretty enough, and such things often occur; he's only fifty!

PRUDENCE. Only fifty! I'd marry a dozen sailors first!

WITHERS. Ha! ha! If that's the case, I'll write to the Secretary of the Navy and tell him to send a first-class frigate up the river. There'll be a chance for you. Ha! ha! (*Exit, R.*)

PRUDENCE. Get out you. I wonder what's got into that fellow's head! I swow to gosh he's soft, or something worse. Marry a man of fifty! ha! ha! ha!

Pat peeps in at C. D.: showing that he has been listening; he approaches Prudence unobserved, looking fierce.

PAT (*in great wrath, mocking her*). Ha! ha! ha!

PRUDENCE. Halloa, where did you drop from? (*Pause.*) What's the matter with you?

PAT. (*fiercely*). Bigá-my — that's what's the matter.

PRUDENCE. Bigá—bigá—what are you talking about?

PAT. Bigá-my.

PRUDENCE. What's bigá-my? You're crazy!

PAT. It is crazy I am? Bedad, you'll be crazy before I get through wid you. Didn't I hear you tell that jintleman that ye were married to—to twilve sailors? That's what's bigá-my—and ye were afthér making me believe that ye niver had any husband at all, at all. But I'll have the law on ye — I will. It'll be more thin twinty years ye'll be afther getting, for they gave Patsey Rooney five years, and sure he had only three wives.

PRUDENCE. Ah! get out! you jealous Irishman.

PAT. Irishman, Irishman! and is it mysilf that made me so? till me that now, till me that?

PRUDENCE. I don't know any thing about it!

PAT. And by the holy powers, who are ye, miss, anyway?—a Yankee—a Yankee! Ye come from the place where they'd skin a rat for its hide, and eat beans, and suckle their children wid a piece of pork tied to a string—where they have ten girl-babies and divil a one boy-baby; and ye must come here to cotch a husband; and is it the likes of ye that would thrifle wid the tinder feeling of an O'Donovan? By the Holy St. Peter, who ever heard the likes!

PRUDENCE. You just git out!

PAT. Git out wid yourself, you stuck up weason. Ye think ye look mighty perty wid your horse's tail and yer camamile back hitched to yer waist.

PRUDENCE. You clodhopper!

PAT. Ye think I don't know what's in it, eh? Bedad, I do! If the goose that died the other day only knew where its feathers were at this blissed moment, it would be dying again wid shame.

PRUDENCE (*threatening with her broom*). If you give me any more of your sass, I swow to gosh I'll make somebody sick.

PAT. It wouldn't be the liver complaint wid tight lacing, would it? (*Prudence runs after Pat and strikes at him with her broom. He runs through C. D. just as Hoxey enters, and she pounds Hoxey, mistaking him for Pat.*

Hoxey (*shielding himself*). Stop! stop! Damn it, stop!

(*Prudence, seeing her mistake, screams and runs off* R. P.

Hoxey. Here's a fine state of things for a Christian community—and on a Sunday too! Truly the iniquities of the world are enough to bring it to an end. This all comes from neglecting Christian observances in the family circle. But what can be expected of a man who even harbors confessed infidels and blasphemers under his roof: I'll do my duty, however, and report this devil's work to Rushton.

Nellie and Ruth enter, C. D.

Hoxey (*sharply to Ruth*). Ruth.

RUTH. Yes, pa.

Hoxey (*severely*). Don't you dare to go out of the house to-day!

RUTH. Only on the lawn, father, with Nellie.

Hoxey. No!

(*Exit, R.*

RUTH (*pouting*). That's real mean; I wish I had as kind a father as you have.

NELLIE. Why, Ruth, how can you say so?

RUTH. I can't help it; I mean it. I can't enjoy myself at all, like other girls.

NELLIE. Don't be put out ; I'll remain in the house with you.

RUTH. You shant do any thing of the kind ; I don't want to spoil your pleasure.

Enter Withers, C. D.

WITHERS. Now, Miss Nellie, you must accompany me. I won't take a refusal ; besides, I have a secret to tell you.

NELLIE. I'm sorry, but I promised to remain in the house with Ruth.

WITHERS. No, no ! I can't accept that excuse. See, here comes one who'll be more agreeable company for her.

RUTH (*quickly*). Nothing of the kind ; I like your assurance !

Muggins enter, R. D.

WITHERS (*laughing*). Well, I'll tell him so.

RUTH. You needn't trouble yourself !

WITHERS. Then you'll accept him as her substitute.

RUTH. No—well, yes.

(Ruth takes book and sits on sofa, L. Muggins takes up book and sits on other end of same sofa)

NELLIE. Never mind, Ruth, I'll return very soon.

(Withers and Nellie exit on veranda just as Chester and Charley enter, R.)

CHARLEY (*aside to Chester*). Just in time to be too late.

CHESTER. That fellow don't let any grass grow under his feet.

CHARLEY. What do you say to a ramble in the woods ?

CHESTER. Any thing will suit me.

CHARLEY (*seeing Ruth and Muggins*). Ah ! Miss Hoxey, will you join us in a ramble ?

RUTH. Thank you, I don't care about rambling at present.

CHARLEY (*slyly*). Will you come, Muggins ?

MUGGINS. No, I'm not feeling very well this afternoon.

CHESTER. That's right ; the truth should be told though the heavens fall.

(Exit Chester and Charley laughing, L.)

RUTH. What does he mean by that ?

MUGGINS (*bothered*). By what ?

RUTH. About telling the truth though the heavens fall ?

MUGGINS. Ah ! I suppose he means that—that if the heavens should fall, we could all crawl in.

RUTH. I don't see any sense in that.

MUGGINS. Neither do I. It's original, you see. *(They move around sofa uncomfortably, apparently looking at their books, stealing shy glances at each other, and trying to appear at ease.)*

MUGGINS. Ruth ?

RUTH. George Washington.

MUGGINS (*aside*). She swings my handle beautifully. (*Aloud.*) Funny name, isn't it?

RUTH (*emphatically*). A bully name.

MUGGINS (*getting nearer to her*). So it is. Shall I tell you how I got that bully name?

RUTH (*coming close to him*). Yes, do.

MUGGINS. A very long time ago—that was before I was around, you know—my father and mother hunted for a nice name for me; wasn't it kind of them?

RUTH. Very.

MUGGINS. Well, my father hunted through the Bible and Webster's Dictionary, and found what he wanted; but that didn't suit my mother; then she waded through a lot of poetry books, and found what she wanted; but, strange to say, that didn't suit my father. Then there was a tremendous crisis. My mother thought she ought to have the biggest say in the matter, and when she found she couldn't, she cried awfully; this brought father down a peg, and after a siege of seven days, they compromised and saddled me with George Washington.

RUTH. You couldn't have a better name; he was an *awful* brave man.

MUGGINS. Didn't he slash into the Britishers and cherry-trees!

RUTH. Do you like stories where there are big, brave men, who do *awful* things for love?

MUGGINS. Don't I! But I like them where there's some tough fighting too. (*They get animated, and crowd together very closely.*) Did you ever read Robinson Crusoe—where he gets shipwrecked all alone on an island, and has a man by the name of Friday?

RUTH. Oh! wasn't it nice!

MUGGINS. Don't I wish I was Robinson Crusoe, and ~~got~~ wrecked on /o an island, and you were my man Friday!

RUTH (*disdainfully*). How could I be your man Friday?

MUGGINS (*pausing*). That's so, by George!

RUTH. Did you ever read the "Count of Monte Cristo"?

MUGGINS. Ah! now you've got it—he discovered a gold-mine somewhere, and busted a ring that had prosecuted him.

RUTH. Well, a little something like that; but he was deeply in love, and another man told his sweetheart lies and got her away from him. Wasn't it mean?

MUGGINS (*indignant*). Mean!—he ought to have had his head punched. I wish we had something nice to read; some good novel.

RUTH. Would you like it?

MUGGINS. Wouldn't I!

(*Ruth pulls a yellow-covered book from her bosom and gives it to*

RUTH. Here; you read.

[*Muggins.*

MUGGINS (*reading*). "The Buckineer's Bride, or the Broken Vow."
(*He looks over leaves*). Any pictures in it?

RUTH. Never mind the pictures; read.

MUGGINS. Chapter first. On a dark, gloomy, tempestuous night, in the early fall of the year 1701, a solitary horseman might have been seen wending his way across the Jersey flats towards a point on the sea coast.

RUTH. Oh my!

MUGGINS. He bestrode a gigantic steed, which was as black as the raven hues of the night around him, and was enveloped in a huge cloak, which fell around him like the graceful drapery of some Grecian statue. (*Hoxey enters slowly R. and takes a seat, listening. Ruth and Muggins observe him, and are seized with great fear. Muggins continues reading, but changes the subject to what appears to be the good little boy.*) And—and the good boy, wouldn't tell a lie, and told the bad boy that George Washington—ton never—never lied, and he wouldn't either; and upon this the wicked boy died and went into convulsions and into heaven, and the good boy went to hell.

(*Ruth nudges him violently.*)

HOXEY. What on earth are you reading?

MUGGINS (*trembling*). Only a—a little Sunday-school book—that's all.

RUTH (*aside*). Oh!

HOXEY. That's right; I like to see you so employed; but can't you read without stuttering so?

MUGGINS (*aside*). I'll collapse!

HOXEY. Bring the book to me and I'll show you how to read.

MUGGINS (*aside*). The devil!

RUTH (*aside*). Fall—break your leg—do something!

MUGGINS (*aside*). He'll break my neck!

RUTH (*aside*). Make believe.

MUGGINS (*aside*). Oh.

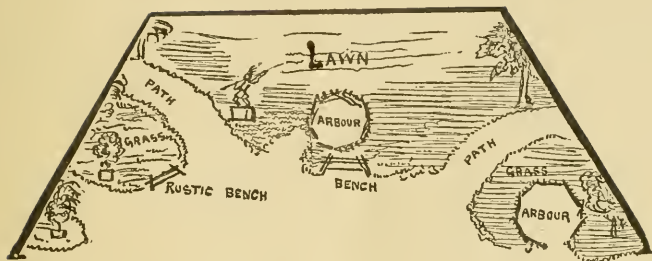
(*Muggins gets up and goes R. to take book to Hoxey; he takes a few steps and lets himself fall.*)

MUGGINS. Oh! oh! oh! my leg! my leg! my leg broke—oh!

HOXEY. Good gracious. Help! help!

(*Hoxey and Ruth run and lift him. Ruth snatches the book from his hand and hides it. Rushton, Ruggles, Prudence and the rest of the characters run in. Tableau. Quick curtain.*)

ACT II



SCENE.—*Garden and grounds at Rushton Villa. (No change.)*
Enter Ruth and Nellie R. with croquet mallets.

RUTH. Just as I expected; no one around. That's the way with these men; they're never around when they're really wanted. Now if we wished to be alone, I dare say they'd be boring us to death.

NELLIE. Let's play a game by ourselves.

RUTH. I don't see any fun in that; it's like having a dumpling without sauce to flavor it.

NELLIE. See, here come your father and Mr. Smithers: Let's ask them to play.

RUTH. No! no! I'd rather swallow a dozen dumplings dry, than have such sauce.

Enter Hoxey and Smithers, R.

SMITHERS. Good-morning, ladies: indulging in croquet, I see!

JENNIE. Yes, sir; we were practicing a little.

HOXEY (*sourly*). I'm afraid your minds hanker too much after these frivolous pastimes to the detriment of more sober occupations.

RUTH (*aside*). More gruel!

HOXEY. These things unfit young ladies for the grave and solemn duties of a Christian. Don't they, Mr. Smithers?

SMITHERS. Oh! yes, certainly; although a little indulgence now and then may be excusable—especially in young persons.

HOXEY. I believe in the sound old doctrines of training young trees in the way they should shoot. Begin young; strike at the root!

SMITHERS. Yes! yes! When they are young they are more pliable, and, as the disciple truly remarks, as clay in the hands of the potter. I take great interest in the growth and development of tender young roots.

RUTH (*aside*). Oh! he calls us roots!

SMITHERS (*to Nellie*). I saw you listening very attentively yesterday ; might I hope that you found my sermon pleasing and profitable ?

NELLIE. I'm afraid it was somewhat too deep for my comprehension.

RUTH (*aside*). Yes, like a bucket without a bottom in it.

SMITHERS. Oh ! these things come in time. You are young yet ; but, with time, your mind will expand so that it will be able to grasp and understand all the mysteries which I humbly endeavor to teach.

NELLIE (*slyly*). I hope so.

RUTH (*aside*). Then she'll understand more than he does.

SMITHERS.—And how did *you* like it it, Miss Hoxey ?

RUTH. Oh ! it was charming, delightful. I understood every bit of it.

(*Aside.*) That's no fib, for there was nothing in it.

SMITHERS (*regarding Ruth with astonishment*). Eh ! yes ! (*Aside.*)

A remarkable girl, that !

HOXEY. Ruth has been brought up under the very shadow of the pulpit, and is remarkably well taught ; would you like to hear her recite a few chapters from memory ?

RUTH. Oh ! Pa ! I've a terrible headache ; I can't recite.

SMITHERS. We must excuse you then, dear child.

HOXEY. Did you read your dozen chapters this morning ?

RUTH (*meekly*). Yes, Pa.

HOXEY. Do it again this evening.

RUTH. Yes, Pa.

HOXEY. Come, Smithers, let's continue our walk. I think I can convince you yet, that it is *more hanging* which we need to reform humanity.

SMITHERS. Very good, sir. (*To Nellie and Ruth.*) I shall have the pleasure of seeing you again by and by. (*Exit, arguing with Hoxey.*)

RUTH. Oh ! don't I wish that Mr. Smithers' head was a croquet-ball for about ten minutes ! (*She strikes fiercely at imaginary ball.*)

NELLIE (*laughing*). Why, he's a very good young man.

RUTH. Is he ? Then he's no business here ; he ought to have died young : they say all good children die young. He's a dose of paragon on two legs—that's what he is !

NELLIE. O Ruth !

RUTH. He calls us roots—says he's fond of roots ; I suppose he is—all men are ; but I'd like to see the root that would have him—the wretch ! Just imagine what a place heaven must be with a lot of Smithers all dressed in white ! I declare I'd rather go to the other place if it wasn't so awful hot. I want to be a sinner anyway !

NELLIE. O Ruth ! how can you say that ?—it's wicked !

RUTH. I don't care : it must be nice to be a sinner : you can enjoy yourself with your friends, and laugh as much as you please—Sun-

days included. I don't like to mope away a whole day in the gloomy house, learning verses from a musty old book. There's some awful people in the Testament, and they do all sorts of dreadful and nasty things; it makes me shiver when I think of them. I don't see why they let such people have any thing to do with heaven at all!

NELLIE. Don't talk so, Ruth, it makes me afraid; besides, we don't understand these things.

RUTH. Nobody else either, I guess, and what's more, I don't want to!

NELLIE. Ah! there comes Mr. Withers and Mr. Muggins.

RUTH. Yes, when we've been pickled by a sermon and don't want to see them. Let's hide in the arbor. (*Goes towards arbor, c.*)

NELLIE. No! not in there; that's father's hiding-place when he wishes to be alone,—no one else ever enters it.

RUTH. This one, then.

(*They run into arbor, L. Muggins and Withers enter from path, L.*)

MUGGINS. I wonder where the girls can be. I don't see them around the grounds.

WITHERS. Never mind the girls; we'll have enough of them before the day's over. Sit down and take a rest. Smoke? (*They sit down on bench c. Withers pulls out cigars and offers them to Muggins.*)

MUGGINS. Yes, thank you. (*Lights cigar.*)

WITHERS (*lounging easily*). "He who smokes thinks like a philosopher!"

MUGGINS. Is that so?

WITHERS (*slowly blowing out a cloud of smoke*). So they say.

MUGGINS. Then philosophers must be devil of fellows after the girls.

WITHERS. How so?

MUGGINS. Why, when I smoke, I always think of the girls: formerly it used to be the girls generally; now it's a girl in particular.

WITHERS. Ha! ha! and it wouldn't take a sphinx to guess who that particular person is, eh?

MUGGINS. Do you know?

WITHERS. Do I know! why, it's written on your shirt-collar, on your boots, your nose, your eyes; it sticks out everywhere.

MUGGINS (*following him, much bewildered*). The devil it does. I don't see it!

WITHERS. Blind folks don't see.

MUGGINS. What are you driving at; is that cigar too strong for you?

WITHERS. Bless me: how green! Why, Muggins, you're a perambulating compass; it doesn't take a man ten minutes to find out where your north pole is—and an excellent pole is Ruth.

RUTH (*in door of summer house*). Oh!

WITHERS. Eh!

MUGGINS. Any thing ailing you ?

WITHERS. No ; are you nervous ?

MUGGINS. No. I thought you struck your funny-bone or an idea.

If you are so very observing, I suppose you must know that there's a confounded south pole around !

WITHERS (*puffing*). Whenever your coat-tail may be desecrated hastily disappearing around some corner, it's a sure sign Hoxey's around.

MUGGINS. Ah, yes ! That south pole's the great sorrow of my life.

WITHERS. Haven't you got gumption enough to outflank the old harderust ?

MUGGINS. I don't know ; he's the ten commandments on legs, and when he's around I feel as if I had broken through the whole slate.

WITHERS. I'll tell you what to do ; follow my advice, and you'll get the best of him.

MUGGINS. By George, I'll try it.

WITHERS. In the first place, you must get religion — a change of heart.

MUGGINS. A change of what ?

WITHERS. A change of heart.

MUGGINS. How the devil's that to be done ?

WITHERS. That's a hypothetical name for something which we imagine : you must make believe, you know. Join the Church ; talk ~~about~~ piety and sentiment ; put in a prayer whenever you get an opportunity, and take a hand in all the little meetings ; make yourself useful, and be particularly attentive and graceful to the old ladies and maidens of the congregation. Now and then, when you find a good opportunity, throw in a few mild scriptural quotations, and when your elders are saying any thing, listen to them with open-mouthed admiration, as if they were saying something wonderful. Do this, and your reputation for piety will grow like a mushroom ; you will gain *entrée* into the best families, and, if you play your cards well, you can marry the richest girl in the market.

MUGGINS. Do you think I can pull the wool over old Hoxey in that way ?

WITHERS. Certainly ; he'll doat on you, or any other rascal who is a good enough hypocrite to play his part well.

MUGGINS. By George ! I've got a change of heart.

WITHERS. Already ! Ha ! ha ! That's good.

MUGGINS. But suppose Ruth may not like this pious business !

WITHERS. Pshaw ! You must be bold with her. Women like to be taken by storm ; you must break through the little breastwork of conventionalities with which they surround themselves and overcome their weak resistance ; they'll like you all the better for it ; they like to be mastered.

MUGGINS. But suppose they get mad?

WITHERS. It will only be sham madness; humble yourself before them, and they'll forgive you: they like us too well to permit us to slip through their fingers—and, by the way, you are one of those lucky fellows who are well fixed.

MUGGINS. Yes. My father fixed me—poor old man! He died and left his hard-earned fortune to a lazy fellow like me.

WITHERS. He very kindly saved you the trouble of marrying one.

MUGGINS. Then you don't believe in marrying for love?

WITHERS. All bosh! The sentimental fever called love soon disappears; but money and its attending comforts are enduring. It gives you power, a social position, independence, pleasure. Where is the poor devil with his narrow income, his wife and his love? Constantly struggling to keep up a decent appearance and to make ~~both~~ ends meet; one continuous strain and worry; living in poor quarters; constantly ~~and~~ humbled in his pride; the slave of each rich, unscrupulous knave or close-fisted merchant; yesterday, to-day, to-morrow—always the same monotonous routine, with the grim, threatening spectre of the future, uncertainty and poverty, in the background. Then you take your wife out, and are swept to the curbstone by the rich trains of passing wealthy fashionables. The wife looks on with keen desire, and wonders why she cannot possess such fineries, and that, if her husband was any kind of a man, he ought to support her better. Then bitterness creeps in and smothers what love remains; and two beings, yoked together like oxen, pull away for kingdom come. No, no; marrying for love is a bad speculation, unless a fortune goes with it; and if the man possesses none, let him marry one. What matters it who the woman is, so long as she's passable in appearance, has little taste, and is dutiful—which latter qualification is the husband's look-out to enforce.

MUGGINS. Well, as the old lady remarked to the cow, "every one to his taste." But I'd rather have Ruth than any cow—I mean any fortune laying around loose. I tell you, sir, there's something in love which you don't seem to understand. It makes a fellow feel as though—as though—as though he had an attack of some gentle and sweetened kind of chills and fever.

WITHERS. Lunacy, you mean.

MUGGINS. Lunacy, I don't mean! You can laugh, but, as the poet says, "Who has not felt the gentle power—?"

WITHERS. Of Linburger cheese and bourbon sour.

MUGGINS (*irritated*). Get out! you've no soul for poetry!

WITHERS (*rising*). I'm afraid my poetic bump was smothered in its infancy. Halloa, who's that coming? (*Looking off, L.*

MUGGINS. It's the Virgin Maria and the Holy Ghost. I'm off.

WITHERS. I'm with you ; they're a little too much for me.

(Exit both, R.)

Ruth and Nellie step out of bower.

RUTH *(shaking her fist at the departing Withers)*. O the wretch ! he's corrupting my Muggins. He calls me a pole.

NELLIE *(sadly)*. Listeners never hear any good, you know. After all, *you* have learned that Muggins loves you.

RUTH. Yes, I'll forgive him a little ; but just let him try to take me by storm, and see what I'll do him. Take care ! here comes vinegar and bitters.

(They both run into arbor again and watch them from door.)

Enter Maria and Smithers, L.

SMITHERS. Then I can depend on your valuable assistance, can I not, my dear Miss Stanhope ?

MARIA. I will do all I can ; but I have already told you that Nellie is a totally spoiled girl. My poor uncle, I'm sorry to say, has very loose notions, and lets her do pretty much as she pleases. I have striven hard to instruct her mind with righteousness, but, I'm afraid, my efforts have been attended with but indifferent success. She prefers friends, company, and frivolous pleasures of the world, to prayer-meetings ; and I can but seldom induce her to attend our sewing circle, and aid in the charitable work of making trousers for the poor heathen savages in China.

SMITHERS. But I'll take her from this house and its worldly allurements, and surround her with the benign influences of a more holy atmosphere ; I will be to her as is the gentle shepherd to the tenderest of his flock, and she will be very happy under my protecting wing. Ah ! if she only had your Christian virtue, I should have no difficulty in approaching her.

MARIA *(regarding him tenderly)*. Don't you think a more mature wife would be more fitting for you ?—one who could sympathize with and appreciate your grand works ?

SMITHERS. Ah, yes ! But it is better that I marry Miss Nellie, and pluck her from the frivolous path which leads to everlasting and everlasting fire.

(They exit, R.)

RUTH *(in door of arbor)*. Well, I never ! That old thing is actually trying to marry you to that young mush-and-milk parson. O ! here is somebody else.

They draw back as Charley and Harvey enter, L.

CHARLEY. I declare, a fellow might as well go walking with a stick

as with you. Why, it's as much as I can do to get an answer to a point-blank question.

HARVEY. Beg pardon, Charley: I've been very busy thinking.

CHARLEY. Of Nellie, no doubt; that's the only thing that seems to run in your head.

HARVEY. I can't help it; besides, I like to think of her. I've been laying some new plans.

CHARLEY. What are they? Come, spin them out!

HARVEY. I'll go back to New York, and move heaven and earth to make a strike, or to secure some position which will justify me in coming back and pressing my suit.

CHARLEY. It's wonderful to see what havoc love will make with a fellow's common sense! Why, Harvey, your chances for moving heaven and earth are about as good as those of making a sudden strike. It wants friends, influential backing and money for those things. If you had the heart of a saint, the head of a Webster, and the energy of a Napoleon—without friends or money, you might struggle a long time before you would drift into channels in which your faculties could assert themselves and receive proper recognition. Not possessing these great qualities, you will perceive that the chances are rather slim; and, during your absence, Withers, or some other forward fellow, will carry off the prize. No, no! If I loved a girl as you do, I'd go for her like a thousand of bricks. Make yourself agreeable to her; and when you see a favorable chance, pop the question. You're a trump, Harvey, and trumps are not so plenty nowadays.

HARVEY. No soft soap, Charley.

CHARLEY. I'm serious. What better husband can a girl have than one who possesses an honest heart?

HARVEY. Poverty is a great obstacle.

CHARLEY. With you, bashfulness is the worst.

HARVEY. It's not bashfulness; it's a kind of veneration which—which I can't explain.

CHARLEY. Well, we won't quarrel about names.

Enter Muggins and Withers, R.

MUGGINS. Ab! boys, here you are! What do you think Withers is trying to ram down my throat?

WITHERS. Come! no tales out of school!

MUGGINS. I'll put it to them as intelligent jurymen.

CHARLEY. I haven't read the papers for three weeks; that may qualify me. Who's the culprit?

MUGGINS. Who! why, the whole woman creation!

CHARLEY. Gad! you can't get an eligible jury in this country. That's a subject on which everybody has a decided opinion.

MUGGINS. Imagine, then, that you were unbiased lunatics, and let me put the case to you. Withers says, that woman is much inferior to man, and naturally wicked, fickle and malicious: he puts them on a level with trained horses or monkeys, and says it's necessary to use a strong will or whip to make them toe ~~X~~ the mark; and further, that they'll like you all the better for doing so.

• HARVEY. Mr. Withers seems to forget that his mother was a woman!
 WITHERS (*sarcastically*). Indeed! It's very kind of you to remind him of that fact!

HARVEY. The reminder may induce him to speak more respectfully of the sex.

WITHERS. Ha! ha! So, you set yourself up as their champion, do you? I'll wager a half dozen of champagne that, before three months are over, you'll denounce them with all the vigor that gall and disappointment can lend.

HARVEY. What do you mean?

WITHERS. I'll tell you. (*To Charley and Muggins.*) I'll bet you two another half dozen, that I'll convince him before you can walk up to the house and return.

MUGGINS. It's a bet!

CHARLEY. Done!

MUGGINS. I suppose you've got some secret process—some hanky-panky way

CHARLEY (*dragging off Muggins*). Never mind the way; let's win our bet. Here goes.

(*Charley and Muggins put themselves into pedestrian attitude and walk off stage, R., with tremendous long strides.*)

NELLIE (*at door of arbor*). Can't we steal away? Oh! if they should discover us!

RUTH (*to Nellie*). I wonder what he's going to say!

WITHERS (*coolly*). Now, my young dry-goods friend, we're alone; and I'll tell you what I mean. You have at various times given me some sharp digs; and I'm well aware that you don't admire my character and person any too well. But that's quite natural: I wouldn't either if I were in your place.

HARVEY (*warmly*). Again I ask, what do you mean?

WITHERS. Don't get excited. You've got a nervous temperament, and excitement's bad for the nerves.

HARVEY. Never mind my nerves!

WITHERS. Then, to business! You love Nellie Rushton—so do I. Fortunately, she's taken a fancy to me; I've got the inside track,

and mean to have her; so you can return to your yard-stick, and moralize, or, what is more probable, damn the whole sex; then, you see, our views will pretty nearly harmonize.

HARVEY. Your assurance is an excellent counterpart to your hypocrisy.

WITHERS. Yes: assurance is an excellent qualification.

HARVEY (*warmly*). I cannot disguise my contempt for a man who expresses your principles.

WITHERS. I wouldn't do it, then.

HARVEY. The instincts of a gentleman seem elements foreign to your nature.

WITHERS. Fortunately, the opinions of a little counter-hopper are of little consequence to the future movements of the universe.

HARVEY (*passionately*). You profess to love Miss Rushton, yet place woman on a level with animals! You love! Yes, the love of a jackal for a stray lamb; the love of a hawk for a dove. You love! Why, you don't know the meaning of the word!

WITHERS. Ha! ha! How romantic! Was that little comparison in the last novel you read? Your love is something superior, I suppose, eh? What wouldn't you do for it?

HARVEY. If I had the right, I'd thrash any coarse rascal who dared speak as you have done, and then couple his name and love with that of a pure, innocent girl!

WITHERS (*mockingly*). You'd do a great deal for Nellie, wouldn't you?

HARVEY. I'll do ten times what you dare. Do any thing, and I'll outdo you!

WITHERS. Ha! ha! the plot thickens! See here, my young friend, this thing's gone far enough. I wanted a plain talk with you, for your own good, and we've had it. The best thing you can do is, go West. I mean to have this girl, and when I make up my mind, it's good as done. You can't fool me with your high-toned professions. In the language of the buffer, "it's too thin." Human nature is weak, and the love of self strong! I don't blame you; but, unfortunately for your little game, I'm ahead of you.

HARVEY. What do you mean by my little game?

WITHERS. You're poor, and ambitious; Nellie will inherit a large fortune, and it's natural that you should go for it—it's a nice fat bait. It's not the money you want—oh! goodness, no!

Hovey and Smithers enter.

HARVEY. Miserable dog!

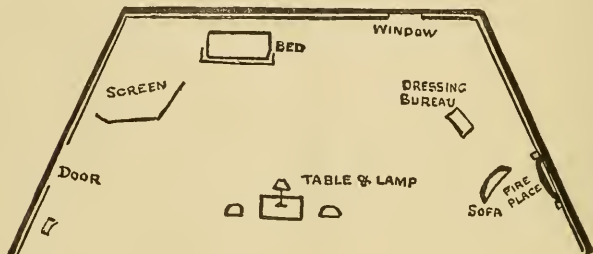
(Harvey seizes Withers by the neck and they struggle.)

WITHERS. Let go! I'll maim you!

HOXEY. Stop! stop! The Philistines are loose! Verily, the world's coming to an end!

(*Charley and Muggins rush in, R., and with aid of Hoxey and Smithers, tear them apart. The girls peer out of arbor in great fear. Tableau. Quick curtain.*)

ACT III



SCENE.—*Interior of bed-room at the villa. (No change.) Time, night. Lamp burning on table. Prudence discovered dusting and arranging furniture. Pat on his knees, L., fanning fire in grate. Both are singing in a disconnected manner as they work.*

PAT. And the rich man, begorra,
Does just as he plaíses;
But the poor devil, och worra!
Must work like blue blazes.

PRUDENCE. I wish I were a fly,
A tiny little thing,
I'd kiss the maidens shy,
And then in haste take wing;
I'd light upon their noses
And watch their smiling gleams,
As they, in graceful poses,
Strayed through the land of dreams.

PAT (*listening to Prudence*). Will ye's hear that gal wishin' she was a fly! Bedad, I wish she was; and I a sphider,—wouldn't I be afther going for her! I'd ashk her to sthep into my parlor, and I'd sing that er beautiful American ballad, "Shoo fly, I got you now."

PRUDENCE. I say, Pat.

PAT (*blowing fire*). What's it?

PRUDENCE. Are you mad?

PAT (*indignantly*). Am I what?

PRUDENCE. Are you mad?

ACT III.

PAT. Do ye's take me for a walking lunatic asylum?

PRUDENCE. O dear, no! Don't be so excitable.

PAT. I'm not excitable!

PRUDENCE. You are!

PAT. I'm not!

PRUDENCE. You are! you are! you know you are!

PAT. I'm not! I'm not! The divil fly away wid you for a contrary piece of baggage.

PRUDENCE. There you go: now you're mad again.

PAT. The saints preserve me! The Holy St. Peter himself would lose his head wid you.

PRUDENCE. Ah, well! I'm sorry for it. Let's make up: here—
(*She holds out her cheek temptingly.*)

PAT (*hesitating*). Ye wicked divil! ye're leading me into temptation ye're taking advantage of my weakness. Ah! ye have such winning ways.

(*He puts his arms around Prudence and kisses her. Hoxey enters door R., and is struck with amazement.*)

HOXEY. What are you doing there? (*She puts her hand to her eye.*)

PRUDENCE. Oh!

PAT (*winking at Hoxey*). Sure she's got a speck of dust in her eye.

HOXEY. The heathen's winking at me. O Sodom and Gomorrah! You can't blow the dust into my eyes, sir. You have sold yourselves to the devil.

PRUDENCE (*terrified*). Oh! oh, dear!

PAT. The blessed saints preserve us!

HOXEY. He has put sugar on your lips to ensnare your souls.

(*Pat smacks his lips inquiringly.*)

PRUDENCE (*indignantly*). He hasn't done anything of the kind.

HOXEY (*to Pat*). Young man, do you know where you are going?

PAT. Yes, sir. I'm going to build a fire in the library, this blessed minute.

(*Exit, L.*)

HOXEY (*shouting after him*). No, sir: you are going where there is a fire already prepared; and you, young womau, have you no shame? Don't you know you have been committing a grievous sin?

PRUDENCE. I don't care; everybody does it. (*She exits disdainfully.*)

HOXEY. Well! well! The depravity of the human race is a heart-rending spectacle! Yet, there's no excuse for it. We have churches, Sunday-schools, missions, and tract societies everywhere; but these people will not listen; will not be guided by their benign Christian influences. They are born evil; they have evil in them, and their works are evil. With all the shining examples of piety before them, they prefer the ways of sin. Yea, verily, the sword o

righteousness shall smite and gather them into the pits of perdition.
(*Exit, R.*)

Re-enter Prudence, followed by Maria.

MARIA (*looking around sourly*). What on earth are the girls doing in this room?

PRUDENCE. The ceiling fell down in Miss Nellie's room, so Mr. Charley insisted on them taking this, while Mr. Chester and himself move to the upper floor.

Enter Nellie and Ruth, R.

NELLIE. Is the room ready, Prudence?

PRUDENCE. Yes, mum.

NELLIE. Why, aunty, I didn't see you! Are you inspecting our new room?

MARIA (*seating herself, C., by table*). No, dear; I want to have a little conversation with you. (*Nellie takes seat by fire, L.*)

NELLIE. I'm listening, aunt.

RUTH (*aside to Nellie*). It's a sermon. I wonder what the text will be.

MARIA (*noticing Ruth*). Ruth, my child, won't you please run up to my room and find my smelling-bottle?

RUTH (*aside*). Boo! She wants to get rid of me.

(*Ruth exits angrily, R.*)

NELLIE. Now, aunty, what is it?

MARIA. Nellie, my child, this is a very wicked world.

NELLIE (*sighing*). Yes. (*Aside.*) A good beginning.

MARIA. As our time here is so very short, we should prepare for something better.

NELLIE (*aside*). Very interesting!

MARIA. Your father, in spite of all my warnings, holds very loose notions of his parental duties; therefore, it can hardly be expected that you should know the heavy responsibility that rests on every human being, and the awful fate that awaits those who will persist in their ways of pride and sin.

NELLIE. He ought to emulate Mr. Hoxey, I suppose.

MARIA. Mr. Hoxey is an exemplary, good man.

NELLIE. I don't see where "the goodness" comes in; he makes every one feel uncomfortable when he's around—even the dogs shrink from him. I suppose, however, this is the result of his holiness.

MARIA. O child! you don't know what you're talking about! But we won't argue the matter; you're too young and ignorant yet. I've come to speak to you on another subject—of one who will be a Moses to you and lead you from the wilderness of iniquity.

NELLIE. Mr. Smithers again!

MARIA. You should be proud of the attentions of such a man ! Think what it is to be a minister's wife ; to be surrounded by a perpetual churchly atmosphere ; to sit in the front pew, ahead of everybody else, and listen to his pleadings for poor sinners ; and how everybody will envy you as you come in and sweep up the broad aisle to your pew ! Oh, Nellie ! if I were only younger !

Ruth runs in, R., with her arms full of toilet trappings, face powder, rouge, false curls, a large bottle, etc. etc.

RUTH (*maliciously*). I couldn't find the salts, so I brought these things—it may be among them.

MARIA (*screaming*). You miserable little wretch ! (*She grabs the bottle and other trappings quickly, and rushes out, R., in great anger.*

NELLIE. Bravo, Ruth, you've saved me from being bored to death !

RUTH. Ha ! ha ! I was bound to have my revenge. The sight of the bottle made her nervous ; it's marked cordial, but it almost burnt my tongue. By the way, what was her text ?

NELLIE. Smithers !

RUTH. Horrors ! I don't see why people can't mind their own business. Here they're tormenting the very life out of us, and all for our good, as they try to make themselves believe. The stupid poke-your-noses ! I think if they'd only turn their wits to work at reconstructing themselves, they'd have plenty of occupation for the rest of their natural lives.

Charley looks in at door, R.

CHARLEY. May I come in ?

NELLIE. Yes, if you promise to behave.

CHARLEY. I'll try.

RUTH. It's very kind of you to give us your room ; I'm sure we're much obliged to both you and Mr. Chester.

CHARLEY. Don't mention it. Harvey knows nothing about it as yet, but he'd have done the same if he'd been here.

NELLIE. Why, where is he ?

CHARLEY. He's gone over to the village to make arrangements for the removal of his baggage to-morrow.

NELLIE. To move his baggage ?

CHARLEY. Yes—all through that unfortunate quarrel this afternoon !

He thinks he's forfeited the hospitalities of this house, or that his presence may be offensive. (*To Ruth.*) Your father told him that if it were his house, he'd kick him out. Besides this, he expects to get a severe raking from Uncle Rushton, when he returns.

NELLIE. I'm going to speak to father ; he shan't scold him.

RUTH. Father always gets the wrong one by the ears. It all comes from being too pious. Why didn't he kick out Withers; he was—
(*Nellie makes sign of warning*) he was bigger anyway.

CHARLEY. He takes Withers' part, and says he acted with great Christian forbearance; he even says it's a pity Withers didn't thrash some of the evil out of him.

RUTH. It's a shame!

NELLIE. Can't you persuade him to remain? Do try—to please me—won't you?

CHARLEY (*hesitating*). I think, Nellie, if you were to ask him, it would have a hundred times more weight. (*Nellie turns away.*) I don't know how this quarrel came about, but, I'd bet my head, it's not all his fault, as they would have us believe. Why, he's the most inoffensive fellow in the world. I hope you won't think hard of him, for he thinks a great deal of you.

NELLIE (*feigning surprise*). Indeed! Why do you think so?

CHARLEY. I don't think so, I know so.

NELLIE (*laughingly pushing him towards the door*). There, be off with you, you vagabond; there's no believing you.

CHARLEY. But, I say—

NELLIE. You're always saying. Ruth, put him out.

CHARLEY. But, Nellie, listen—

RUTH. Here—march! (*Pushes him towards the door.*)

CHARLEY. I'm in earnest.

RUTH. So am I. (*Leads him to door by the ear, and pushes him out.*)

There's never any trouble but there's a man at the bottom of it.

CHARLEY (*looking in at door*). I was just going to say—

RUTH. Get out! (*Ruth takes off her slipper, and as Charley pops his head in a second time she fires it at him.*)

CHARLEY (*picking up slipper*). I'm going to give this to Muggins.

RUTH (*running to door*). Here—Charley! Please give it to me.

CHARLEY. Young ladies who fire slippers at gentlemen must take the consequences. There's only one thing that will redeem this.

RUTH. What's that?

CHARLEY. A kiss.

RUTH. I think you're real mean!

CHARLEY. Then here goes.

RUTH. No! no! Ah! won't you give it to me?

CHARLEY (*holding out his cheek*). C—O—D.

RUTH. What's cod?

CHARLEY. Collect on delivery.

RUTH. Well, if it must. (*Kisses him and snatches slippers.*) Get out, you mean thing!

NELLIE. By the way, Charley, you mustn't retire until Mr. Chester returns.

CHARLEY. Certainly, not; or you'd find him banging at your door. Good-night.

NELLIE. Good-night.

CHARLEY. I said "good-night," Mrs. George Washington 'Muggins.

RUTH (*turning her back to him*). Don't speak to me!

(*Charley exits, R. Nellie locks door after him, then seats herself in front of fire, L.*)

NELLIE. No one knows that we were hidden in the arbor.

RUTH. No; our secret's safe.

NELLIE. And what have we not learned!

RUTH. Ah, yes!

NELLIE. Poor Harvey! If we had not witnessed the affair, we too, like the rest, might condemn him.

RUTH. And that brazen hypocrite, Withers, makes them believe he's an innocent injured lamb. Oh! the villain! He calls me a pole. Do I look like a pole?

(*She jumps up and surveys herself in the mirror. Nellie sits at fire, meditating.*)

NELLIE. Certainly not.

RUTH. I'd like to throw some red pepper in his eyes. What's the matter, Nellie? You look quite blue. A penny for your thoughts!

NELLIE. A little experience has made me sober, that's all. Go to bed, Ruth; I'll follow directly.

RUTH. You want to be alone, don't you? You want to think of somebody—I know! Well, I'll leave you to your lonely misery; I'll give you just one hundred and twenty seconds. (*Retires behind screen*).

NELLIE (*meditating*). Where is my ideal of a man now? Ah! how appearances deceive! He seemed so strong, so bold and confident, so noble. I see now, what I took for manliness was but the assurance of a cool adventurer, who has everything to gain and nothing to lose. And I might have given myself to him! What an escape! There's no affection in that cold, selfish heart; his indifference and coldness would have killed me. No! no! the man to whom I give myself must love me very much; he must be kind, patient and forbearing; a cold, repelling word would chill me to the soul. Poor Harvey. I scarcely thought of him; he's so quiet and reserved; yet the old motto, "Still waters run deep." He loves me indeed. Nature betrayed itself in his anger; there's no hypocrisy there! He's brave as a lion, too. Ah! if he could only read my thoughts, now!

(*Ruth comes from behind screen in her night-gown, steals up to Nellie and throws her arms around her. Nellie screams.*)

RUTH. Ha! ha! How frightened you are! Who did you think it was?

NELLIE. You, of course.

RUTH. O you story-teller! You thought it was somebody else—Mr. Withers perhaps?

NELLIE. I hate that man.

RUTH. Chester, then. You see I've guessed it; but he's so awful bashful; he trembles when you touch him; he doesn't know how to make love.

NELLIE. Do you?

RUTH. Do I? I guess I do! Imagine you were my sweetheart, and I was coming to pop the question. (*She sweeps around to L. front, then advances to Nellie very formally.*) Miss Rushton—ahem! From the moment I first saw you, I was smitten with an absorbing and diabolical love; no meat, no drink, has passed these lips since that destiny-shaped hour.

NELLIE. How long ago was that?

RUTH. Don't interrupt me. Your love is the sun, moon, and stars of my existence; therefore, if you deny me its celestial light, I'll give myself up to despair, and break my neck in the universal darkness that will follow. (*Kneels to Nellie.*) You wouldn't see me break my neck in the dark, would you? Then, be mine! (*She throws her arms around Nellie and hugs her.*)

NELLIE. Ha! ha! I'm afraid no one could resist such an assault; but where did you learn all this?

RUTH. Never you mind; I know a few more things which might astonish you.

NELLIE. I shouldn't be surprised, you naughty girl! Come—let's to bed; it's late. (*Exit behind screen.*)

RUTH. I'm ready. (c.) I wonder how George will go about it when he pops the question? He's been popping all over for some time, but it hasn't come to a head yet. Withers told him to take me by storm. I'd like to see him—I'll storm him!

Ruth goes back, puts chair by bed and kneels. She lets down her hair with one hand, and, in an absent minded manner utters, in a hum-drum way:—Now I lay me down to sleep; te-tum, te-tum, te-tum te-tie. Her thoughts seems anywhere but in her prayers; suddenly a new idea strikes her; she begins to count on her fingers and seems deciphering something.

RUTH. Nellie?

NELLIE (*behind screen*). What is it?

RUTH. Can you say the Lord's prayer backwards?

NELLIE. That's very wicked!

RUTH. Why, they're the same words?

NELLIE (*coming out in her night-gown*). But the right spirit is lacking.

RUTH. Do you believe in spirits? O dear, I'm afraid of them! Did you ever see a ghost?

NELLIE. Be quiet, you foolish girl.

(*Nellie puts out light on table; they both retire behind the curtain of the bed. The fire on the hearth throws a soft, mellow light over the front of the stage; the bed at back is in the shade. After a few soft measures by the orchestra, the window is pushed open at back, and Harvey scrambles in, his coat buttoned to his chin. He advances front, rubbing his hands as if chilly.*

HARVEY. Confound that Charley! He crawls quietly to bed, leaves the doors double-locked, and no one up to let me in. If I hadn't risked my neck on that lightning-rod, I'd have been obliged to fall back on the stable, or thump at the door till the whole house was in an uproar; that would have been another excellent string for that old bigot to harp on. Halloa! a fire! (*Goes to hearth, rubbing his hands.*) Charley, old boy, that's the most sensible thing you've done in an age; I'm almost inclined to forgive you for the trouble you put me to. (*Takes off coat and boots, and settles himself on a sofa, front of fire.*) This is what I call comfort. Ah! if my heart were only silent! (*He fumbles in his coat-pocket and takes out a pipe.*) Come forth, thou poor devil's consoler; thou canst perhaps help me to forget myself for a while. (*He lights pipe, smokes, and looks pensively into the fire, meditating.*) How much happiness is possible in this world, and yet how little we obtain! If I only had a sweet, affectionate, true-hearted little wife like Nellie, what a paradise earth would be! I'd go to the store, work with a will, and when night drew near, I'd start for home, knowing that some one would be anxiously awaiting me; then a hug and kiss behind the door, and all the cares and vexations of the whole day would be forgotten. (*Puffs.*) Then we'd sit down to dinner at a snowy little table, all to ourselves, and she'd float around like a tidy little angel, pouring out my coffee—telling me not to burn my tongue. Then we'd chat and chat, and the sight of her would be the finest appetizer in the world. After supper, we'd go into our little sitting-room, before a fire like this, and she'd sit in my lap, with her arms around my neck, playfully pulling my wool, or looking in my eyes, asking all sorts of little questions, (*puffing*), and getting all sorts of little answers. Then I'd surround the room with beautiful objects and pictures, which would awaken trains of beautiful thought; and we'd talk and talk, until the little silvery stroke of the clock would hint that it was time to retire, then we'd — O thunder! (*He starts violently from chair, sticks one*

hand in his pocket, walks up and down front excitedly, pulling furiously at his pipe, and talking hurriedly.) A beautiful, tender, refined wife, nice home, pictures, objects of art, at a salary of fifteen dollars per week! (*Passionately.*) There's a screw loose in the universe, somewhere! Fate deals most unjustly! To the rich, she gives the treasures and pleasures of the earth; to the poor, scarce enough to keep body and soul together. To the rich, power, leisure, opportunity for study and culture—every thing; to the poor, incessant labor, humiliations, yearnings which can never be satisfied—the sting of the overbearing. When I see the many gilded palaces, swarming with beautiful objects, beautiful women, refinements, luxuries, and contrast them with the barren possessions of poverty, I feel as though I were ripe for any desperate deed, or, in my bitterness of heart, could lead a communistic rabble into the very jaws of death, and grasp—grasp—grasp what? Pshaw, I talk like a fool! The mass of mankind must be toilers; must form the lower foundations upon which the social fabric is built; and why should I be more favored than millions of my fellow men? Rather, be thankful that thou art what thou art; envy not those who are where thou wouldst like to be, and pity and help those who are still beneath thee. Nature is a strange school; but I hope she will bring us out all right. (*Walks up and down, puffing clouds of smoke. Ruth coughs.*) What a delicate cough that boy's got! Well, I must get to bed, and to-morrow (*sadly*)—to-morrow!—ah! yes. So ends the brightest dream that has e'er made sport with my simple heart; and I return again to the city—to a future hopeless and monotonous—a mixture of cloth, calicoes, boarding-house, blues, and hash. I must leave my good-inspiring angel here—leave her an easy prey to that rascal Withers. Oh! I'd gladly give my life for her: but that wouldn't be giving much—fifteen dollars a week. If I only dared speak to her. Pshaw! 't would be useless! They're all against me. And who am I? A high private in the grand army of nobodies. Well, such is life! I can at least carry her image in my heart. (*Looks around.*) Halloa, where is my trunk? I hope old brimstone hasn't visited the sins of the owner on his baggage and kicked it out already! Yes—it's gone. And that old dry-bones calls himself a Christian! O words, words, how are ye abused! Some one must reconstruct the Dictionary. Well, it's no use fretting; I might as well get what rest I can. (*Goes back to bed and lifts side of curtain.*) There he is, as usual, covering the whole bed like a spread eagle. He wants to be kicked over on his own side half a dozen times per night. Ah! if, instead of that boosy head, that was only my wife—confound it, I'm off again. Here, Charley! Charley, get over, get on your own side.

(*He punches the sleeping form; both girls awake and scream loudly. HARVEY (dumbfounded). Heavens and earth! what's this? (Their screams grow louder; Harvey runs around bewildered; the voices of Hoxey and others are heard outside; they attempt to force the door; Harvey runs to window and jumps out, just as the door is burst open, and the whole establishment enter in various hastily-robed conditions. Nellie faints in her father's arms and Ruth drops into Muggins' Tableau. Quick curtain.)*

ACT IV.

SCENE.—*Parlor at the villa, same as in Act I. (No change.)*

Enter Charley and Muggins, R., laughing.

CHARLEY. It's the best joke of the season! If I hadn't stole out with his coat, boots and hat, the cat would have been out of the bag.

MUGGINS. And even the girls think it was a burglar.

CHARLEY. Yes; I could scarcely keep from exploding when I heard them describing the villain.

MUGGINS (C.). And the beautiful and appropriate remarks of Deacon Hoxey on burglars, and the depravity of mankind in general. Ah! no wonder poor Mrs. Hoxey's an invalid! That man's piety would kill a rhinoceros. By the way, I've got her consent to marry.

CHARLEY. Whose, the rhinoceros'?

MUGGINS. Rhinoceros be hanged! Mrs. Hoxey's.

CHARLEY. Ah! that's good.

MUGGINS. She believes in me. As for the old bear, I'm going to tackle him to-day, but it's an awful pill.

Ruth enters, C. D., apparently reading.

CHARLEY. Well, I wish you luck; but look out for the sword of righteousness
(*Exit, R.*)

Ruth advances down C. to front, reading.

MUGGINS (*aside*). Ah, there she is! Now I'll try Withers' plan—I'll be bold with her. (*Aloud.*) Ruth, I want to speak to you.

RUTH (*aside, C.*). He's going to take me by storm!

MUGGINS. Come here.

(*He takes her hand, drags her to sofa, L. F., and forces her to sit; then sits himself beside her, and puts his arm around her. He tries to appear bold through the foregoing action, yet his fear and uncertainty betray themselves, and make his action ludicrous.*

RUTH (*springs up in great wrath*). See here, sir! What do you mean by taking such liberties? (*Muggins retreats in fear across to R., followed by Ruth in a threatening manner.*) You good-for-nothing scamp! where did you learn such manners? I took you for a gentleman, but I find I was awfully mistaken—you wretch! (*Cries.*)

MUGGINS (*R., aside*). Great heavens! I must have left something out!

RUTH. What do you mean by insulting me? I'll go and tell my father. (*Aside, quietly.*) That'll settle him.

(*She feigns crying, and goes to sofa, R.*)

MUGGINS. Confound that Withers! I knew it wouldn't work. This is taking her by storm with a vengeance! What shall I do? (*Approaches her cautiously.*) Ruth, Ruth, don't be angry.

RUTH. Go away, I don't want to see you again! Boo-hoo! (*Cries.*)

MUGGINS (*aside*). The devil take that Withers! Ruth, I'm awful sorry—I'm in sackcloth and ashes, like David, when—

RUTH (*fiercely*). Don't you dare to preach to me, you wretch! I get enough of that at home.

MUGGINS (*aside*). Done it again: just my luck! (*Aloud.*) O Ruth! it wasn't my fault at all; this all comes from listening to bad advice; it's all Withers; he said I should raise a storm, and I've raised a hurricane, a flood, and the devil knows what else! Only forgive me this time. I'll never do so again.

(*He sits himself beside her, pleadingly; Ruth still crying.*)

RUTH. Never?

MUGGINS. Nevermore.

RUTH. And you won't have any thing to do with Withers?

MUGGINS. Never; he's a promulgator of false doctrines.

RUTH (*looking up*). You'll never attempt to take me by storm again?

MUGGINS. Not if I know myself.

RUTH. Well, then, you're forgiven.

(*She lays her head on his shoulder, and puts her arms around his neck lovingly.*)

MUGGINS (*aside, in ecstasy*). Hurrah! Here's a living contradiction to the storm theory; it's gentleness that does it. Yet who would have thought that this little piece of femininity could raise a first-class hurricane at a second's notice! Perhaps I'm holding a couple of hundred young, undeveloped hurricanes in my arms this minute!

RUTH. George, dear, what are you thinking about?

MUGGINS. I'm thinking, dearie, what father Joseph would say, if he should see us now.

RUTH (*springing up*). Oh! I almost forgot. (*Looks around uneasily.*) It's too bad that we can't have a moment's peace.

MUGGINS. It's bad; but, as St. Jeremias says, "every rose has its

thorn." Ruth, I'm going to speak to your father this very day—this very hour; and if he says yes—

RUTH. But if he says no?

MUGGINS. No? If he says no, by George, there will be an earthquake! Come along, I'm going to look for him now.

RUTH. You go first; I'm all in a tremble.

MUGGINS. So am I; but somebody's got to do it. (*Exit both, R.*)

Enter Rushton, led by Nellie, through C. D.

NELLIE. Come, pa, sit here; I want to talk with you.

(*She pulls him C., they sit on sofa.*)

RUSHTON. Now, my darling, what is this very important matter? Has the bulldog been worrying some of your pets again?

NELLIE (*hesitating*). No, father. I want to speak to you of that young man.

RUSHTON. A young man! Zounds! Some young rascal has been throwing stones at them, or stolen—

NELLIE. No, no, father; it's about Charley's—

RUSHTON. What has Charley been doing again?

NELLIE. Not Charley—his friend, Mr. Chester—

RUSHTON. Another rascal! To come into my house, insult my guests, and create a disturbance.

NELLIE. O father! you don't know—

RUSHTON. To fight like cats and dogs. A fine return for my hospitality!

NELLIE (*pleadingly*). Father, you don't understand—

RUSHTON. No one can understand such contemptible doings.

NELLIE. You misjudge him, father.

RUSHTON. Is the rascal still in the house?

NELLIE. Please don't call him a rascal—he's not a rascal at all. If you only knew him! He's very good and very brave, but he's so quiet, you can't see it.

RUSHTON. But I've seen too much; he's an ugly fellow.

NELLIE (*half crying*). He's not an ugly fellow. Can't you see that he's not ugly; it was not his fault.

RUSHTON. If it was not his fault, whose fault was it? He's said nothing to excuse himself, therefore I must believe him guilty.

NELLIE. It was Mr. Withers' fault. Oh! he's a very mean man; put him out.

RUSHTON. Impossible! Mr. Hoxey and the rest exonerate him of all blame; so, young Chester must go.

NELLIE. Do believe me, father, those mean people are all misrepresenting him; I know he is innocent: please make him remain.

RUSHTON. Impossible, my darling—impossible! (*Nellie exits, R., crying.*) Ah! you dear little sly puss! you wouldn't divulge your secret; well, we must wait the upshot of this little drama, and, in the mean time, your poor little heart must ache a little.

Enter Hoxey, Smithers and Withers, C. D.

HOXEY. Rushton, here's the Rev. Smithers come to congratulate us on our narrow escape from the burglar, last night.

RUSHTON (*aside*). That will be something to set the village tongues wagging for the next six months.

SMITHERS. Yes, everybody is talking about it; and I'm sure we're all delighted to hear that you escaped this desperado without injury or loss.

RUSHTON. Thank you. I expect the unfortunate man was as much frightened as we were.

SMITHERS. Have you no traces of the culprit?

WITHERS. Nothing has been seen or heard of him; we caught a seedy looking rascal, shortly after daybreak, but he turned out to be a reporter, who was fishing up the particulars.

HOXEY. It's to be regretted; the fellow ought to have been caught and hung.

SMITHERS. Yes, justice should be sure and swift in dealing with all law-breakers.

RUSHTON. Ha! ha! Why, my dear sir, what would become of the great American Eagle? You'd depopulate our glorious republic! If justice dealt each rogue his due, we'd be obliged to fence in half of it, and then it would be a curious speculation to see on which side of the wall we'd find ourselves.

WITHERS (*aside*). The old fellow's head's level, by thunder!

HOXEY. Yes, it's a sad commentary on the depravity of the times; and in this age of enlightenment too—with churches, missions, tract societies, and Christian associations everywhere!

SMITHERS (*piously*). We must hope and pray that a better era will dawn upon us.

RUSHTON (*impatiently*). No! We must work for it; hoping and praying are useless unless the disposition to work and push accompany them; we must practice more and talk less; when we do this, we shall be making some progress worth speaking of.

SMITHERS. Very true; as the disciple James wisely remarks, "We must be doers as well as hearers and talkers."

RUSHTON (*aside*). Confound the disciple! He quotes like an encyclopedia, but doesn't practice worth a copper.

Harvey enters, C. D.; he puts down small satchel and advances front, F. C. The characters on stage regard him with curiosity. Nellie enters, C. D., and remains near door, observing the leave-taking.

HARVEY (*to Rushton, with dignity and feeling*). Mr. Rushton, I'm about to leave you; but, before doing so, I desire not only to thank you for your kind hospitality, but to express my regrets for the unpleasant affair in which probably I was the principal culprit. No one can regret more deeply than myself the unfortunate occurrence, and I humbly offer you my apologies.

Nellie watches her father earnestly and seems much hurt at his replies.

RUSHTON. Young man, I suppose I must accept your apology for what it's worth. I am very sorry that you should have chosen my house for your pugilistic exploits.

HARVEY (*bitterly*). The indiscretion has been severely avenged. Good-by, sir.

RUSHTON (*without looking at him*). Good-by.

NELLIE (*at back, aside*). Not one even proffers a hand!

HOXEY (*coldly*). Young man, let this be a warning to you; you're on the road that leads to the broad and yawning gulf; repent ere it be too late, or perish in your stubbornness. I tell you, you'll come to a bad end!

SMITHERS. Yes, young man, we should profit by the teachings of experience; you're wilfully shutting your eyes to the sublime truth, and giving yourself to the Prince of Darkness. Repent ere it be too late.

WITHERS (*aside*). What a comforting send-off for the poor devil. (*Aloud to Harvey, with feigned contrition*.) I trust we do not part in anger? I sincerely regret this unfortunate occurrence!

HARVEY (*coldly*). I thank you, gentlemen, for your very kind and, under the circumstances, exhilarating remarks; they grace the peculiar qualities of Christian charity which you so beautifully represent. I have the pleasure of bidding you good-by.

(As he turns to go through C. D., he sees Nellie, who is holding out her hand to him. He is greatly moved, but, seeing himself observed, he grasps it, regards her earnestly a moment, and exits quickly, C. D.)

RUSHTON (*aside*). There's no doubt about it; the girl loves him! (*Exit, R. Nellie remains back, looking after Harvey; Withers approaches and addresses her; she shrinks from him, comes front, to sofa, takes book and reads; Withers takes book and seats himself by her. Hoxey, C., Smithers, L. Muggins enters, R.*

MUGGINS (*aside*). Now is the winter of our great uneasiness—and there sits the unconcerned cause of it all! If I only knew what he'd say!

To think that all my happiness depends on that pickled old duffer!

Well, here goes.

(*He advances front.*)

HOXEY (*seeing Muggins*). Well, young man, how's your leg?

MUGGINS (*limping*). It's rather painful; but, as St. Paul says, "what can't be cured must be endured."

HOXEY (*horrified*). What on earth are you saying? Saint Paul never said that!

SMITHERS. The young man has evidently made a mistake.

MUGGINS (*aside*). Hang it! Withers will be the death of me; this comes from "mildly quoting Scripture."

HOXEY. I'm afraid you don't know your Testament very well.

MUGGINS. O yes, I do! The pain's gone into my head, and mixed things a little; that's all. By the way, Mr. Hoxey, won't you please come into the garden a moment, I—I want to speak with you.

HOXEY. If you want to speak with me, speak out.

MUGGINS. But it's something very confidential.

SMITHERS (*aside to Hoxey*). Go with him, brother, I think the spirit is moving within the young man.

HOXEY. Very well. (*To Muggins*.) Come along.

MUGGINS (*aside*). This is awful! (*Exit Hoxey and Muggins, L.*)

WITHERS (*R., aside*). I wish that white-choker would take a turn in the yard; I must press my suit.

SMITHERS (*L., aside*). There she is, absorbed in some pretty book. I wish that young man would go out; I really must speak to her.

WITHERS. He doesn't seem to have any idea of moving. I must get rid of him. (*Crosses to back, then comes down, L., looks out window. To Smithers.*) Beg pardon, but I think Mr. Hoxey wishes to see you. He was motioning from the garden.

SMITHERS (*aside to W.*). Won't you do me the favor of telling him that I'll join him presently?

WITHERS. I'd gladly oblige you, but I'm subject to momentary attacks of paralysis in the limbs; I have one now. (*Rubbing his leg.*)

The pain is so excruciating that it's impossible to walk while it lasts.

(*Sits on sofa as if in pain.*)

SMITHERS. Couldn't I assist you into the adjoining room for a few moments? I have a few words for Miss Rushton, and desire to speak with her privately.

WITHERS (*aside to S., laughing*). No, you don't! no, you don't, my clerical friend!

SMITHERS (*indignant*). How, sir?

(*Nellie looks at the two with great contempt, and steals off, R., unobserved.*)

WITHERS. Leave you alone with a lady—you, a clergyman? Why,

that would be exposing you to all sorts of dangers. I have too much regard for you to permit the running of such risks. Halloa, she's gone! All right, sir, you're safe. (*Aside.*) I must follow her and press the siege. (*Exit, R.*)

SMITHERS. That's an exceedingly common and low-bred fellow; I don't like him. (*Exit, L.*)

Enter Muggins, L., looking wild and pale.

MUGGINS (C.). Damn every long, lank, skinflinting, driedup, big-footed, choker-wearing, pious-looking, hypocritical wretch. Damn every stony-hearted, sour-crabbed, ugly-looking, big-nosed, preaching sort of a fellow! Oh! the miserable product of Yankee civilization, who kills the happiness of two whole lives as lightly as if they were two whole mosquitoes! I'm done for; I've nothing more to live for.

Ruth enters, C. D., her face buried in her hands.

RUTH. George!

MUGGINS. Ruth!

(*They fall in each other's arms and cry violently on each other's shoulder.*)

RUTH. It's a shame; that's what it is.

MUGGINS. It's worse than that!

RUTH. He doesn't think of anybody's happiness.

MUGGINS. He only thinks of the devil.

RUTH (*after a pause, disengaging herself from Muggins' embrace*). What are we going to do about it?

MUGGINS (*wiping his eyes*). We must hold an indignation meeting, or start a society to reform pious fathers.

RUTH. Mother is willing.

MUGGINS. And I am willing.

RUTH. And I am willing.

MUGGINS. I have it. This is a republic—the majority rules; we are three to one; let's marry in spite of him!

RUTH. Yes, yes—but where will we go?

MUGGINS. I'll steal one of Rushton's fast horses and a wagon, and we'll go to Dr. Ruggles; if he won't do it, we'll find somebody who will. Come along.

(*They take each other's hand and run to C. D.; they meet Hoxey on the threshold and start back in fright.*)

HOXEY. What's the meaning of this?

MUGGINS (*quickly*). It means some awful mischief; just look in that closet and you'll find it out—it's awful!

(*Points to door on R. side, at back.*)

HOXEY (*frightened*). What is it? What is it? Where?

MUGGINS. Just look into that closet. (*Points to door.*)

(*Hoxey approaches the door hesitatingly, opens it and looks in. Muggins measures the ground behind him, braces himself, and runs against Hoxey, sending him headlong into the closet. He then locks the door and throws key out of window.*)

RUTH (*screaming*). Oh! what have you done!

MUGGINS. Hurrah! hurrah! The devil's in limbo. (*To Ruth.*) If you love me, come along.

(*As they run off, C. D., Smithers enters; Muggins sends him flying over a chair, and exits with Ruth. Quick curtain.*)

ACT V.

SCENE.—(*No change.*) Reception-room at Dr. Ruggles'. 3d or 4th, grove. Entrance, L., hat-rack, chairs, etc. Door, C. [*into library*] and R.

Enter Ruggles and Rushton, R.

RUGGLES (*laughing*). Well, I declare! it was rather a strange adventure; why, a dramatist could scarcely have drawn his characters together better.

RUSHTON. Yes, they all seemed to have been drawn under my very nose. I was inclined to be a little mad at first, but, after a while, I found it an interesting study. The girls were hid in one arbor, and, like myself, obliged to hear every word that was uttered; although, they haven't the slightest suspicion that I, too, was a witness to the little comedy. First, the field was occupied by one party, who vacated at the approach of the other, and so on, until the battle closed the scene.

RUGGLES. I'm glad that you have seen these people in their true colors. As for the young man Chester, I share your favorable opinion; there's no doubt he's an honorable, conscientious young fellow; and as to his beliefs, why, time and conscientious search will regulate them according to his understanding.

RUSHTON. No doubt: Nellie has a sincere love for him, and I mean to give him a grand lift in the world.

RUGGLES. I think you will find him worthy of it.

Enter Charley, L.

RUSHTON. Well, Charley, did you arrange matters?

CHARLEY. Yes, uncle.

RUSHTON. How soon will he arrive?

CHARLEY. I expect him every minute.

RUSHTON. Very good; I'll go down-stairs and see what the little pouter's got to say.

RUGGLES. You'll find me in the study when you return.

(Exits Ruggles into study, C. D. Rushton and Charley exit, R.)

Muggins enters in great haste, followed by a man and maid-servant, who regard him with great fear.

MUGGINS. Where is he? where is he?

1st SERVANT *(aside)*. He looks wild! It's a lunatic! O dear!

MUGGINS *(fiercely to servants, who huddle together)*. Where is he, I say?

2d SERVANT. What do you want?

MUGGINS. I want the parson! Where's the parson?

2d SERVANT. What do you want with the parson?

MUGGINS *(fiercely)*. What do I want with the parson? as if a person came to the parson for any thing else but to be married or buried! You lunatic, can't you tell me where the parson is?

Ruggles enters from study with a book in his hands; the servants run off, L.

RUGGLES. What's the trouble, young man?

MUGGINS. O Doctor! I'm glad to see you! *(He grabs the book in the doctor's hand and shakes it, mistaking it for the hand.)* The trouble is, I want to get married; the party of the second part's down-stairs—will you do it?

RUGGLES. 'Pon my word, this is rather rushing it!

MUGGINS. If I don't do the rushing, somebody else will, *(aside)* and mighty soon too! We're both of age, and a half of our parient consents. *(Looking at his watch.)* It's now two o'clock, and I want to catch the 2.30 train for New York. Come, put us out of misery!

RUGGLES. As to that, I can't say, but it will be putting you into one or the other.

MUGGINS. Will you do it?

RUGGLES. Well, as I know something of this case, I will.

MUGGINS. Hurrah! *(He runs, L., and calls off to Ruth.)* Come up, he'll do it!

Ruth enters bashfully and steals to Muggins' side.

RUGGLES. Step this way; I'll call some witness, and dispatch you as quickly as the law allows.

(He exits into study. Ruth and Muggins wait till he's off stage, then embrace each other and follow him.)

Enter Harvey, L., dressed for travelling, with satchel, coat, etc. He lays down baggage and looks around.

HARVEY. This is Dr. Ruggles' study, where Charley's note instructs me to wait; he has something of importance for me. Can it be a note from Nellie? Oh, if it were! Her eyes were filled with tears when I bade her good-by, and I longed to speak to her, yet dared not trust my tongue in the presence of those wretches who were gloating over my misery. When I see the success which so many knaves and hypocrites enjoy, I think the old maxim should be changed to "Trickery and rascality is the best policy."

Rushton enters, R.

RUSHTON (*severely*). Halloo, sir! What are you doing here?

HARVEY (*aside*). He here!

RUSHTON. I thought you were on your way to New York.

HARVEY (*C.*). You see you were mistaken, sir.

RUSHTON. But I don't see the meaning of your presence here! I thought, after the display of rowdyism with which you favored us, you'd scarcely care to be seen in this neighborhood!

HARVEY (*sadly*). You use a very harsh term, sir.

RUSHTON. The law calls it assault and battery, and assault and battery is the outcropping of rowdyism. How may I interpret your presence here? Is there some new outrage under foot?

HARVEY. I have given you no cause for entertaining so mean an opinion of me.

RUSHTON (*aside*). He keeps his temper under excellent control. (*Aloud.*) Young men are very depraved nowadays; thefts, burglaries, and all sorts of desperate crimes are very common. There's no knowing whom to trust; even you—

HARVEY. Stop, sir! You have wounded and humiliated me enough with your displeasure; you need not insult me more by putting the whole criminal calendar on my shoulders. I expected at least a little better treatment from a gentleman.

(Picks up his baggage and goes to door, L.)

RUSHTON. Stop, that's the front door! You'll oblige me by making your exit through the back entrance. *(Points to R.)*

HARVEY (*aside*). Oh, who'd have thought this of him!

RUSHTON. And as there's no telling what you might take—into your head, I'll send some one to see you off the premises.

HARVEY (*haughtily*). You need not trouble yourself.

RUSHTON (*goes to door, R.*). Halloo there!

(Harvey takes up baggage and walks to door, R., haughtily; as he

reaches the threshold, Nellie enters; he drops baggage and starts back in amazement.

RUSHTON (*laughing*). Nellie, take this rascal up to the villa, and lock him up in the deepest dungeon; watch him closely, for he's a desperate character.

Nellie clasps Harvey's hands joyfully.

HARVEY. Heavens! have I lost my senses? (*He staggers.*

RUSHTON (*catching him*). You, foolish boy! Don't lose your head, that's mortgaged now. Here, sit down. (*Puts him on chair.*) Nurse him, Nellie, while I run for the doctor's medicine-chest. (*Aside.*) It's almost too great a shock for the poor boy. (*Exit, R.*

HARVEY. Is this reality?

NELLIE (*embracing him*). Can you doubt it?

HARVEY (*after a pause, rises and comes c. with Nellie*). You're not tritling with me? No, no! you could not be capable of such baseness! O Nellie! a lifetime can not repay the joy of this hour!

(He folds her in his arms; his back towards L.)

Hoxey, Withers, Smithers, and Maria rush in, L. D. Hoxey seizes Harvey and shakes him.

HOXEY. You villain! (*Harvey turns around.*

ALL (*in amazement*). Mr. Chester!

HARVEY (*embracing Nellie*). And Miss Rushton—at your service!

HOXEY. Sodom and Gomorrah!

WITHERS. Damnation!

MARIA. Well, I never!

HARVEY (*mockingly*). Can I do any thing for you, gentlemen?

HOXEY. This is horrible!

SMITHERS. Shameful!

MARIA. I shall faint! (*Falls into Smithers' arms.*

SMITHERS (*supporting Maria*). The wolf has entered the field and carried off the pet lamb!

WITHERS (*aside*). And cooked my mutton, confound him!

HOXEY (*to Nellie*). Come here, you hussy! (*Nellie clings to Harvey.*

MARIA (*recovering*). You shameless girl!

SMITHERS. As Christians, it becomes our duty to tear the lamb from the claws of the wolf.

HARVEY. As a happy man, who doesn't care a snap for your whole party, I advise you to mind your own business.

ALL. Oh! oh!

They make a movement towards Harvey, who stands on the defensive, when Rushton enters, R., with bottle.

RUSHTON. Halloa! What's the meaning of all this? This is rather an unexpected visit!

MARIA. O Mark!

(Cries.

SMITHERS. Mr. Rushton—

RUSHTON (R.). Well, sir?

HOXEY. Do you see? *(Points to Chester and Nellie.*

RUSHTON *(looking)*. Do I see what?

HOXEY. Do you see your daughter?

RUSHTON. I do; what about it?

HOXEY *(shrieking)*. What about it? *(To others.)* He's gone crazy!

SMITHERS. The action of this young man is scandalous!

RUSHTON. Perhaps he's been following the example of some of your pious brethren!

MARIA. I shall die with shame!

RUSHTON. I perceive that you do not exactly comprehend the situation. Permit me to enlighten you by presenting my future son-in-law, Mr. Chester.

ALL. What!

HOXEY. Is it possible!

SMITHERS. Piety and virtue have no appreciation here!

WITHERS *(aside)*. Check mated, by Jove!

HOXEY. My doubts are verified. Mark, are you in your senses?

RUSHTON. I'm happy to state that my faculties were never clearer than at this identical moment.

HOXEY. Then you commit a grievous sin. To rear a tender child to womanhood, and then deliver her, body and soul, into the hands of an infidel, a child of darkness! O Mark! Mark! I have often warned you against your loose ideas; I knew you would ruin your child. Look at my daughter—

Charley enters and announces loudly, "Mr. and Mrs. George Washington Muggins." Exclamation of surprise and astonishment by all as Muggins and Ruth enter, followed by Ruggles

HOXEY *(in great anger)*. Ruth!

WITHERS *(aside)*. Now for an explosion!

HOXEY *(yelling)*. Come here, you miserable sinner.

(Moves to seize her.

MUGGINS *(shielding Ruth)*. Don't you know it's a dangerous thing to interfere with another man's wife?

RUSHTON (*aside to Hoxey*). Why, Joseph, this rather spoils the little comparison you were about to draw !

HOXEY. Ruth, I disown you ! (*To Muggins*.) And you too !

MUGGINS. Thank you—much obliged to you.

HOXEY. Who has dared perform this unlawful ceremony ?

RUGGLES. I must confess myself the culprit.

SMITHERS. There are many wolves in sheep's clothing in the ministry.

RUGGLES. I regret to say, many asses too.

HOXEY. Let us leave this nest of sinfulness. (*To Ruth*.) And you, hussy, never show your face to me again.

RUGGLES. Before you go, my friend, let me give you a bit of advice. Christianity and uprightness is not a matter of words or appearances, but of works. Words are the light playthings of the tongue, but works proclaim the spirit and worth of the man ; then do not go preaching, with the tongue, what your works belie. The first principle of Christianity is charity ; but when I examine your conduct and actions, I find a lamentable absence of the first principle.

HOXEY (*to Smithers*). Let us go ; the devil's turned preacher ! (*Exit, L.*

SMITHERS. Yea, verily, the judgment-day cometh ! (*Exit, L.*

MARIA. I shall die with shame ! (*Exit, L.*

CHARLEY (*aside*). She's been dying with shame the last fifteen years, to my knowledge.

WITHERS (*aside*). My little game's miscarried ; fortunately, however, the matrimonial market is large, and fools plenty. (*Aloud*.) Permit me to offer my congratulations to the happy couple that is, and that's to be. I regret to say that the atmosphere of this place does not agree with me—it's too strong, so I shall have to tear myself from you.

RUSHTON. By all means look after your health ; you'll find the atmosphere getting much stronger here, in a very little while.

WITHERS (*politely*). Adieu. (*Exit, L.*

RUSHTON. Now, my children, how do you feel ?

HARVEY. There's no name for my joy !

NELLIE. Nor mine !

RUTH. I feel as if I'd swallowed a whole laughing-gas factory !

MUGGINS. I feel like Samson when he slew the Philistines—or any other hero. I've euchred the devil and Hoxey and Orthodoxy.

RUSHTON. I trust that your happiness may be lasting, and it remains with you to make it so. Let your creed be Kindness and Charity ; let it manifest itself in your intercourse with every one, and you will not only create happiness around you, but will be strengthened, elevated, and purified by the self-same influences which you endeavor to cultivate.—*Curtain.*





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